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## EDITORIALS

### 1. Angola

For more than ten years, after those early days of 1975, the South African/Cuban involvement in Angola seems to have been conducted with a certain amount of caution. Now, with the large-scale engagement of both, and perhaps even some Russians, in recent battles, there is a real risk of the whole sub-continent being dragged to disaster.

Some rumours have it that there is a mood of self-congratulatory euphoria abroad in South African military and Government circles over the reported checking and turning back of the 1987 MPLA drive against UNITA. If there is, we hope it isn't the only mood to be found there. Common sense suggests that the predominant one should be anxiety over where South Africa goes from here.

You don't have to be very intelligent to know that this is a war that South Africa can never win. For that to happen the SADF would have to take over the whole of Angola, something which the world will simply not allow. A more likely scene, unless a peaceful solution can be found, is one in which the MPLA continues to control the greater part of the country, is recognised as its legitimate government by the world community, and feels honour-bound every year, when the season is right, to try to re-establish its control over the whole of it. That means clashes of the kind which seem to have taken place in late 1987, on an annual and escalating scale. Only a military maniac could contemplate such a prospect with anything but the greatest anxiety.

In this highly dangerous situation is it not time to go back to the beginning, to how it all began, and to see if what the South African Government feared then, and presumably still does, would not be a great deal less of a risk than what we have now?

It all began, as we recall, because of the South African Government's fears of SWAPO coming to power in

Namibia and then, supported by a friendly Angola, pursuing policies hostile to South Africa, becoming closely associated with the Soviet bloc, and allowing the ANC to use its territory as a base.

That a SWAPO government would have been hostile to apartheid is certain, but how far that hostility would have been taken is another question. Not very, having regard to Namibia's economic dependence on South Africa, hindsight suggests. Even if it had gone quite far in the first emotional post-independence flush, we doubt it would have lasted, and suspect that South Africa would have been able to cope with it at far less cost materially and in terms of its long-term security interests, than it has paid and may still have to pay for its Angolan adventures. Mozambique provides the supporting evidence. Even without the destabilisation from which it has suffered we believe that country's self-generated economic disasters would have soon driven it into an accommodation with South Africa. So, too, we guess, Namibia.

Is it too late to turn the clock back?

To hold an election under UN supervision? To help whoever wins it on the way to independence? Surely not. In fact, from the South African point of view, this could be a very good time to do it. We suspect that both the Russians and the Americans will go to considerable lengths to avoid being drawn into a regional conflict whose course and end result would be totally unpredictable. This could include putting pressure on the Angolan factions to make peace, and providing the guarantees of its security on that front that South Africa requires. By some such process a long-term settlement might be reached. There is no way it will be by continuing along the course events are taking in Angola now. □